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FM AMEMBASSY BRATISLAVA
TO RUEHUP/AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST IMMEDIATE 0905
INFO RUEHBM/AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST PRIORITY 1818
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0268

UNCLAS BRATISLAVA 000733

SIPDIS

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SENSITIVE

BUDAPEST FOR HAMILTON, PLEASE PASS TO LANTOS
BUCHAREST FOR NELSON, PLEASE PASS TO LANTOS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [LO](#)

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON SLOVAK-HUNGARIAN TENSIONS FOR VISIT OF
CONGRESSMAN LANTOS

¶1. (SBU) This cable is intended to highlight the latest events in Slovak-Hungarian tensions since your departure from the U.S. on August 21. Any necessary updates on other ongoing issues in Slovakia will be provided at a briefing upon your arrival in Bratislava on September 4.

¶2. (SBU) The GOS is sensitive to the Slovak-Hungarian ethnic tensions and knows that it must deal with this issue. Even before the recent spate of incidents including flag-burning video clips, soccer hooligan banner-waving, and physical attacks, this issue was the impetus behind FM Jan Kubis's first official trip abroad being to Budapest. Kubis has remained at the forefront of this issue and is in regular consultation with Hungarian FM Kinga Goncz. Kubis and Goncz held a televised dialogue on August 29 and plan another joint event for the upcoming weekend.

¶3. (SBU) Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico most recently spoke on the subject on August 29. He strongly condemned all expressions of extremism and said he would support any meaningful resolution put forth in parliament, including any submitted by the Slovak Hungarian Coalition (SMK), to denounce extremism and intolerance. (NOTE: A declaration condemning extremism and intolerance, initiated by SMK with the support of other parliamentary parties, is expected to be issued later today. END NOTE.) That said, the GOS feels that the GOH and SMK are exacerbating the tensions for political gain. PM Fico is worried about ethnic tensions leading to European-wide isolation, starting with the discussion in early July of a suspension of Smer's membership in the Party of European Socialists for including the Slovak National Party (SNS) as a junior partner in their governing coalition. Fico did not attend an August 23-24 meeting of European Socialists in Vienna. It is believed that his lack of attendance was due to calls from the Hungarian representatives to elevate Slovakia's issues with ethnic tensions to international forums. Both SMK and the GOH are looking to Fico to say and do more against extremism. Fico has consistently tempered his denunciations of extremism with shots at SMK and the GOH to stop attempting to dictate the actions of the GOS. Deputy Prime Minister Dusan Caplovic, with whom you will be meeting and who holds the portfolio for minority rights, has been more forceful in speaking out against extremism and intolerance, despite his nationalist background.

¶4. (SBU) The Slovak police have consistently acted against extremism. They have charged the perpetrators of a video showing the burning of a Hungarian flag and the shouting of anti-Hungarian sentiments with "promoting an ideology that suppresses the rights of others," arrested soccer hooligans waving anti-Hungarian banners at matches, detained members of

a banned extremist group when they attempted to interrupt a public commemoration of a Slovak holiday, created a special unit to find the perpetrators of an attack on an ethnic-Hungarian woman, and immediately arrested the attackers of an ethnic-Hungarian young man. The GOS would like to see the GOH take similar police action in cases of Hungarians waving anti-Slovak banners at soccer games in Hungary.

15. (U) A timeline of recent events:

- 23 August: PM Fico, FM Kubis and other cabinet members attend the Hungarian Embassy's reception in honor of St. Stephen's Day in a symbolic gesture of outreach.
- 25 August: DPM Dusan Caplovic holds a meeting and joint press conference with SMK head Bela Bugar. Caplovic publicly condemns extremism and extremist acts. The two agree to monitoring of extremist incidents in Slovakia's ethnically-mixed areas.
- 25 August, cont: A 23-yr-old ethnic Hungarian student is physically attacked by skinheads in Nitra for speaking Hungarian on a her cell phone. Head of Slovak police Jan Packa says he will not tolerate any extremist actions. He creates a special unit for the investigation of this crime. SNS releases a statement remarking that there is no justification for physical attacks by extremists.
- 26 August: PM Fico publicly denounces extremism. He also says that there is no need for others to appeal to the Government of Slovakia to reject extremism.
- 26 August, cont: Slovak police arrest three men for waving a banner with the words "Death to Hungarians" at a soccer match in Banska Bystrica.
- 26 August, cont: Six men physically attack a 19-yr-old male, allegedly for speaking Hungarian, in the town of Sladkovicovo. However, it is not clear that this was a simple case of ethnic hatred since the assailants and the victim had known each other for years and the attackers were drunk. Slovak police immediately arrest the perpetrators.
- 27 August: PM Fico calls on politicians and the media to stop inflaming nationalist extremism.
- 28 August: PM Fico denounces all acts of extremism and promises that the GOS and police will act immediately, whenever necessary. He adds that it is not up to Hungary to dictate Slovakia's responses.
- 28 August, cont: Slovak Ambassador to Hungary Juraj Migas informs the GOH that all Slovak parties - including SNS - unambiguously reject demonstrations of extremism and intolerance in Slovakia and Hungary. He adds that the GOH's disproportionate reactions are contributing to the tensions. He notes that Hungarian efforts to bring the issue to international forums are intentionally harming Slovakia's reputation.
- 29 August: In what is regarded as his first truly strong statement on the issue, PM Fico condemns all expressions of extremism, again noting that external appeals to do so are unnecessary. He says he is ready to support everything in parliament which denounces extremism and intolerance, including any meaningful resolution that SMK would submit.
- 29 August, cont: Slovak police detain more than 10 members of Slovenska Pospolitost, a banned extremist group which attempted to interrupt the commemoration of the Slovak National Uprising, an event which PM Fico was attending in Banska Bystrica.
- 30 August: FM Kubis announces that the GOS condemns extremism not only as a matter of policy, but also in action

by police investigations and arrests. He asks Hungary to demonstrate similar specific actions in fighting extremism. Kubis also claims that SMK is participating in a campaign to discredit the GOS.

- 31 August: FM Kubis said that he hopes Slovakia's international partners recognize the day-and-night efforts that the GOS is making on this issue. President Gasparovic expressed concerned over the increasing number of manifestations of intolerance. He cannot agree with any possible justification for such acts. He added that Slovakia should not be inappropriately criticized for such incidents, but rather should be praised (for the way in which Slovakia is dealing with them.)

VALLEE